A WORD FOR SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY

IN APPEAL FROM

THE MEN OF SCIENCE AND THE THEOLOGIANS.

AN ADDRESS,

AT THE

OPENING OF THE SESSION 1868-69

OF

MANCHESTER NEW COLLEGE,

OCTOBER 5, 1868.

BY

JAMES MARTINEAU.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.
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AN ADDRESS.

THE College which enters to-day on a new year of work belongs, however modest its own pretensions, to a class of institutions highly characteristic of English life. They are lineally descended from the Puritan resistance to sacerdotal authority; they are the public declaration that England shall not be all Anglican; the acknowledgment of a sphere of truth and duty where no writ of King or Parliament will run. The Act of Uniformity, which finally destroyed the religious unity it aimed to establish, terminated also the educational unity which had brought all candidates for University learning to Oxford and Cambridge. The national character and convictions had set in two distinct types, and were following two different directions: and those ancient schools would henceforth represent but one. The

other, not content to be starved out, had to create for itself private institutions where, perhaps under some reverend exile returned from the lecture-rooms of Leyden or Basel, the sons of the Nonconformist gentry and their future clergy might find compensation for what even Magdalen College must now deny them. The disadvantages of these poor schools is so obviously great, that there is less to wonder at in the scholarly contempt for the "Dissenting Academies," than in the fair success with which they have fostered the love of learning and the appreciation of intellectual gifts among a people driven from the public springs of higher life. Without fixed seat or local associations, without libraries, without endowments; lodged in no venerable halls rich in the memorials of English history; dependent on the precarious bounty of living supporters and the still more precarious capacity of accessible teachers; with scant companionship, with little emulation and less variety of mind; these obscure Colleges seem not only repellent to all natural ambition, but unqualified to be the home of a large and liberal culture. Something indeed they have had to plead as a set-off against this poverty of resource. In the spiritual field it is not always the most elaborate husbandry that produces the most ample fruits; and

the very self-abnegation which could dispense with the honours, if only it could find the light, of knowledge,—nay, even the struggle to keep pace on foot with the well-mounted official guides on the road of truth,—favoured a manly, strenuous and disinterested tone of mind, without which the most delicate scholarship becomes a lifeless personal accomplishment. Inheriting, moreover, the genius and traditions of the Genevan Reformation, the Nonconformist Colleges, like the Universities of Scotland, reducing the Pagan literature to a secondary place, threw all their earnest interest into the gravest problems of human nature and human life, and strengthened themselves chiefly on the side of philosophy and theology: so that their discipline produced, as in the case of Butler, Price and Priestley, a certain power, precision and flexibility of thought in dealing with moral, social and metaphysical theories; and, as in the case of Jeremiah Jones and Lardner, a comprehensive and sympathetic insight into the early history and literature of Christianity. Accordingly, throughout the last and the present century, we find, in the best representatives of the Nonconformist laity, a taste for letters and art, a scientific curiosity, a breadth and firmness of political judgment, which have had their natural

weight in spite of ungenial manners and unpopular opinions. And if we compare, for the same period, the Bishops' requirements for ordination with the range of study for the young divine at Daventry, Homerton, Warrington or York, we shall understand how it is that the most elementary discussions of Biblical criticism, which have long ago spent their effect elsewhere, and left the religion of thoughtful men purer than before, fall upon the English Church with the shock of novelty, and tear it between retreating superstition and hurrying negation.

Still, whatever partial merits these small Colleges may claim, no one would have devised them, or resorted to them, but for a necessity of conscience. They constituted a provisional service organized for a period of exile,—the little school-shed run up in the forest, because the queenly Alma Mater was out of humour, and had shut against us the gates of her intellectual metropolis. It is easy to see, in spite of some stately airs of reluctance and delay, that her relenting mood has come at last, and that the way will soon be open for our return; and it is a natural question, whether there will then be further occasion for special institutions like ours; or whether, with the removal of ecclesiastical barriers, all separate education ought not to merge in the great national

schools of the higher culture. "You withdrew," we shall be reminded, "from Oxford and Cambridge, not because you did not like their teaching, but because you could not get it, so long as intolerant tests barred the way. You took your youth aside, not from any preference for learning in a corner, but because they could not pass into the throng without leaving honour on the threshold, or enter on the race but on unfair conditions. The times are changed, the tests are all but gone: why not disband your Colleges, turn their resources into scholarships, and send your young men to find their level among the mass of educated contemporaries and in the class-rooms of the élite of English teachers?"

This proposal is too rational not to demand, and too fascinating not to obtain, serious consideration; especially as it only carries out to the last result a process already successfully begun. A policy, unique among Nonconformists, has been followed in regard to this Institution. Everywhere else they have shrunk from the experiment of mixed education, and in presence of great open Colleges here and in Manchester, have maintained and multiplied their purely denominational schools. The supporters of this Institution, on the other hand, removed it to London from express preference for mixed educa-

tion, and cancelled all its functions except those of the theological faculty which University College did not supply. This, however, *is* supplied by the older Universities; and it becomes a question, whether, when they finally cease to shut us out, the last remnant of separate teaching should not be abandoned, our Divinity school dissolved, and our students mingle undistinguished, like Hungarians or Swiss at Göttingen or Bonn, with those of other communions.

Among those who are afraid of mixed education, so bold a question could never be entertained. Their primary care is to create and fix a preconceived type of belief and character in the alumnus; their secondary, to infuse as much knowledge and accomplishment as may consist with this chief end. And if, even during the disciplinary studies of his undergraduate career, they think it requisite to keep him all to themselves, much more vigilantly will they insist on securing his mind when he reaches the Divinity school and launches on problems unfathomable and infinite. They will never send him where there is no guarantee that their scheme of doctrine will prevail with him; and their objection to trust their young divines to Oxford and Cambridge will be that Dr. Pusey is not an Independent, or Dr.

Lightfoot a Baptist, and that Mr. Maurice is dangerously far from the Westminster divines. This kind of objection I wish emphatically to disclaim. It can have no weight with those who courageously embrace the principle of mixed education, and believe in the invigorating effect of a new atmosphere of thought, under which the still life of habitual things assumes shifting forms and changing colours. What travelling scholar, in choosing his University abroad, would dream of inquiring whether at Jena he could be sure of a good Lutheran Professor, sound on the Real Presence, and at Berlin he should be protected from Rationalism, and at Heidelberg be kept right about the Fourth Gospel and the Incarnation? No sooner does he escape from our insular narrowness, and see before him the broad continent of European culture, than he asks only where he may learn most, and simply follows where the light may lead: warmed by the genius of Ewald, stimulated by the ingenuity of Volkmar, enriched by the learning of Hilgenfeld, aided by the judgment of Dorner, without even measuring their place on the great map of dogmatic opinion. The moment the opportunity is given him, he forgets the prejudices of ecclesiastical position and follows the intellectual instinct of the scholar; returning probably, after it has been satis-

fied, to his own place; but bringing into it a different presence, a mind and heart carried out beyond the stiff formulas of custom and tradition, to breathe a larger air, and bathe in a sweeter light, and gather a more gracious wisdom to be diffused around.

By sending our students in Arts into the class-rooms of University College, we have pronounced in favour of mixed education. By encouraging our Hibbert scholars to resort to the Universities of Germany, we directly extend the principle to *Theology*, and refuse, even in that field, to take security for the reproduction of our own opinions. It would seem to follow that if the rule is good for Leipzig or Tübingen, it must hold for Oxford and Cambridge. Are we then prepared to dissolve our only surviving faculty, and hand over our students to those more distinguished theological schools? Certainly not; and that for a reason purely Academic, and quite removed from all ecclesiastical fears or interests. Oxford and Cambridge are not like Leipzig and Tübingen; and the difference is this: that the former have to teach up to certain pre-determined results; the latter, to teach whatever they find to be true. The former, that is to say, are there, not to educate, but to arrest education; the latter, to conduct the student to the present limits of the

known, and exercise him in the method of advancing them into the unknown. This alone is Science; the other is the negation of Science; and all the erudition it may gather is but the ashes of a burnt-out fire, in which no flame of intellect and soul can live. There are two conditions of an open University. It is not enough that no one is turned back from the doors of its lecture-rooms: the Professors must be free to teach, as well as the students to learn; and until that is the case no less in the faculty of Theology, than in those of Law, Philology, and Physics, thoughtful men can only treat its pretensions as a venerable imposture, and it must yield the palm, as an instrument of culture, to the most modest school which honestly accepts the appointed conditions of intellectual and spiritual light. The Obscurantist never dies; but as he re-appears from age to age, he adroitly changes his mask and speech. In the days of Reuchlin and Erasmus, he set his face against the "new learning," as if he had some "old learning," instead of mere "*old ignorance*," to defend. His cry has now become "Denominational education," "Catholic Universities," "Anglican" schools, Presbyterian, Independent, Methodist Colleges:—devices all for shewing things not as they are, but as he would like them to look, and for absorbing

this or that element of the divine light, ere it reaches the eye, by intercepting and darkening media. The Sects and the Sciences do not admit of being classified together; the one being founded on subjective limitations of human thought, the other on distinctions present in the objective reality of things: and if a University is to be the orderly home of all knowledge, storing the present and with spaces for the future, if its organism is to reflect the whole intelligent effort of man to interpret the world, it must repudiate all alliance with ecclesiastical parties as a simple betrayal of its trust. The practical effect in this country of such faithlessness in our Universities to their own idea I will describe in no words of my own, but in those of the distinguished Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Reviewing the schools of his own University, Mr. Mark Pattison excuses himself thus for passing by, in the silence of despair, the first in rank and in endowment. "The faculty of Theology must be considered in abeyance for purposes of education at present. There is indeed a scientific theology, and, in the Christian records of the early and later ages, the amplest material for various learning and critical investigation. But theology has not begun to exist as a science among us. In the present state of the public mind in this

country, it is hopeless to propose to assign to it the place and rank which is its due. I must be content with having marked this place, as being side by side with the other schools which entitle, each of them, to a degree, and which have a defined course of studies leading up to that degree. But I cannot venture to propose what is obviously impossible. Theology will, I fear, in practice, continue to occupy its present degraded position of an extraneous appendage tacked on to the fag-end of every examination in every other subject. In this respect the academical traditions of the sixteenth century, when all education was theological, have been continued into our day, partly from mere habit, partly with the idea that, by thrusting in theology into every examination, we were making education religious, as the Puritans of a former age imagined, that by the employment of Scripture phraseology they sanctified common conversation."*

* "Suggestions on Academical Organization, with especial reference to Oxford," pp. 319, 320. This little book, remarkable as a lucid picture of Oxford in its present constitution and usages, handles the whole problem of University reconstruction with a breadth and firmness truly impressive. Its suggestions are probably too bold and comprehensive for early adoption. But meanwhile the ideal which they present cannot be contemplated without a purifying effect upon English prejudices, and an enlarged appreciation of the University as a function of the national life.

Here, then, is our answer to those who say, "The old Universities will be open immediately: dissolve your College, and send your students there, where there are schools, not of Arts alone, but of Divinity too." We cannot send them to a place where "the faculty of Theology must be considered in abeyance for the present." And here is our plea for still attaching some value to our own school: that, however inadequate its division of labour, however imperfect the competency of its teachers, when measured by the intellectual resources of the continental seats of learning, it at least (and, so far as I know, *alone*) incorporates their principle, and serves, till better days, as an asylum for the hunted and banished idea of "a scientific theology." No pledges, actual or implied, are asked from the professors, except for the faithful devotion of their faculties, in the respective provinces assigned them, to the search and communication of truth. No question is asked of the student, except the practical one as to his choice of a mode of life; and *that* as a condition, not of his instruction, but of the benefaction which saves him its cost. Nor in its lectures is there anything which might not be transposed to an auditorium at Berlin or Halle, with no other effect than that of sinking into the shade beside the brilliant expositions of

distinguished teachers. This function, of saving, till the floods of party delusion subside, the idea and example of "a scientific theology," is the solitary claim I put forth for this College. I know that the claim is derided by outside observers who judge all human projects by the complexion of their subscription lists. I am not surprised that it is unappreciated by those who think of all theologies as so many party manifestoes. The English mind is vitiated through and through by the identification of religion with partizan opinions. But the procession of new orthodoxies cannot be eternal; and if only a few men will but hold fast to the assurance that the truth about divine things is to be found on similar conditions with the truth about human and kosmical, the higher spirits will at last return, and find that they gain no genuine light and sacredness till they are beyond the hootings of the Church crowd.

Is there, however, such a thing as "*a scientific theology*"? For I find its possibility questioned from quite another side; not by those who have too narrow a conception of religion, but by those who have too narrow a conception of science. It is one of the most curious effects of the brilliant and rapid advance of physical research in modern times, that it has absorbed to itself alone the meaning of the

word "Science," and forced its own language and conceptions, as if the intellect had no other instruments or work, upon the whole field of human thought. Pronounce the word "Science" before an English crowd, and in not one man out of a hundred will it call up any notion but of astronomy, geology, chemistry, optics, and other partial interpretations of the outer world; and if it be the educated crowd, gathered in the halls of the British Association recently assembled at Norwich, in not one of a thousand. In this restricted sense, undoubtedly, Theology is no "Science;" along this path, if that were all, its Infinite Object is not apprehensible; and I cannot wonder that the eminent and high-minded President of the Association, speaking from this exclusive point of view, sanctioned with his great authority the dictum that religion deals only with the inscrutable, and can make no terms with science, except by unconditional surrender of the whole field of intelligence, and withdrawal into the dark; and that "if the two would work in harmony, both parties must beware how they fence with that *most dangerous of all two-edged weapons*, Natural Theology; a science falsely so called, when, not content with trustfully accepting truths hostile to any presumptuous standard it may set up, it seeks to

weigh the infinite in the balance of the finite, and shifts its ground to meet the requirements of every new fact that science establishes and every old error that science exposes. Thus pursued," it is said, "natural theology is to the scientific man a delusion, and to the religious man a snare, leading too often to disordered intellects and to atheism."*

In this latest indictment of the scientific against the religious intellect, the distinguished botanist has surely expressed himself with less than his usual precision. Two voices seem to sound through these sentences,—one which denounces *all* natural theology, another which denounces only *bad* natural theology, and thereby allows the possibility of a better. In declaring the Power behind the world absolutely inscrutable, the speaker cuts off all passage from nature to God, and unconditionally excludes *all* "natural theology," as necessarily illusory in its very aim and essence. Yet instantly, as if in recoil from the strength of his own charge, he softens his tone to this dangerous impostor, and makes it a false science only when it misbehaves itself, in a way which he proceeds to describe. And what is the disqualifying offence to which it is said to be prone? (1) That it will not accept discovered truths which

* Report of President's Address : Athenæum for Aug. 22, 1868.

displace its preconceptions; (2) that it is always shifting its ground to meet the requirements of new facts as they are established. As one part of this misconduct consists in rejecting, and the other in admitting, new truths; one in holding by an obsolete universe, the other in moving onwards through the opening fields, they cannot both be committed by the same culprit at the same time; and, since the only way of avoiding each is to enact the other, the first cannot be wrong unless the second is right. If any "natural theologian" sets up a "presumptuous standard," and obstinately refuses to see the fresh spaces explored beyond it, let him by all means be condemned; not, however, for his "theology," but for his "presumption" and his prejudice; for his irreverent preference of his own dreams to the Divine order he pretends to seek. But if your rebuke shames him into repentance, and he flings his "presumptuous standard" away, and advances his position to the front, with what consistency can you turn round upon him with the reproach that he has run away from the "old errors" and is occupying the "new truth"? What would the Theist be worth, if he were *not* for ever shifting his ground, and widening his programme; letting the Jewish "firmament" open, and release his

thought into the real vault of night; reconstructing his petty chronometry, and learning to count by the beats of geologic time; dropping from his imagination the successive starts and paroxysms of creation, and substituting the eternal thinking-out of the Universal Order along the quiet steps of law? The very test of his fundamental conception is, whether it permits him to shift his ground fast enough without parting company with it; whether it is flexible enough to bend and move with the rapid curves of advancing knowledge: or whether, on the other hand, polarized light, or the waves of sound, or the magnetic current, or the cellular architecture, are impossible modes of action for a Living Will. How can it be an offence in the natural theologian to say of these things, "I embrace them all; for me they make a far better and diviner world than the poor little peep-show of Genesis or the Timæus; and He of whose mind all the modern sciences are the partial reflection is to me an auguster being than Jehovah or Zeus"? With what sense or justice can you tell him that his study, "thus pursued, leads too often to disordered intellects and atheism"? and yet not tell him how, otherwise pursued, it may consist with sanity and theism? To class atheism with madness and to hold

it up in terror and in warning, is to treat it as a disastrous illusion, into which it is pitiable to fall. But it can be so only in proportion as the truth which it denies is important and accessible to a reasonable mind. The path (wherever it may be) of legitimate access to that truth is "natural theology;" and to shut up the approaches, yet frighten you for missing the goal, is surely an inconsistency which would be more in place in a council of the church than in a hall of the philosophers.

Probably we shall best reach the real meaning of the indictment, if we let its qualifying clauses fall away, and take it in its unconditional form, as charging absolute nullity upon all natural theology, however it may behave. And if by this be meant that there is no place for it among the Inductive Sciences, and that the cognitive powers and methods which help us to our Physics and Chemistry are incompetent to carry us on to Religion, I am not disposed to controvert (though, to render it exact, I should wish to qualify) the proposition. The objects of Natural knowledge are the phenomena which we notice by outward perception, and which we group into laws by attention to their differences and succession; and if this were all the work for which our intellect is fitted, we certainly could never

apprehend a Divine nature which is beyond phenomena, and is the ground of all their laws. But, I must submit, it is a very inadequate reckoning of the cognitive resources of the human mind, which limits them to the inductive faculties; and nothing can be more unwarrantable than to pronounce an object unknowable simply because *they* are unable to reach it. We are made capable of knowing, not only that which happens, but that which is; not only phenomena, but existences; not only laws, but causation: and this additional knowledge not only is just as certain as the other, but actually underlies it as its condition, and has to be assumed in every inductive proposition. Space, for example, infinite Space, is no phenomenon, and no law of phenomena, but a necessary existence, of which we have more absolute assurance than of any physical changes occurring within it. Causal Power again is no phenomenon, and is more than the law of phenomena: it evades your senses, which notice only the changes which take place; it evades your registering memory, which can record only their order of succession: yet you so believe in it, that you cannot speak of a natural fact without assuming it; the language of all physical sciences is steeped in the conception of it; and the whole tissue of relations among them

is woven by the dynamical idea. These interpreting ideas, not inductively reached, but furnished by the intellect itself as organizing principles for its experience, no one can help accepting as exponents of reality, and treating as a part of his knowledge. They are the sources of his deductions (as Geometry works out the idea of Space), without being the result of his inductions. Even therefore within the limits of physical knowledge, the mind is introduced to existences, real and not phenomenal, which are no part of its scientific discovery, yet which form the very cement of its conceptions, and deserve whatever trust belongs to the primary conditions of intelligence itself.

Among the existences thus disclosed in the very structure of our faculties, only half-hid till the moral nature speaks, is the Divine. Conscience is as much a human fact as Reason and Perception, and is no less entitled to be believed on its word. And if there is anything invariably clear in its utterance, it is this: that we live under an authority above us, speaking in the law of right and wrong, and wielding our compunctions as ministers of justice; therefore, from the very nature of authority, under a Living Will transcending our personality and communing with it. The Divine rule over life is no less

correlated to the Moral faculty, than the existence of an external world to the Perceptive; and as there is no difference in the nature of their evidence, so are they held with equal cogency of natural belief, wherever men are found: and they first come into question together, when the mind's intuitive reliances are corroded by the action of false metaphysics. Under such artificial influence, you may dispute the validity of the natural revelation; you may construe the world and God into Matter and Force; but with no result beyond the exchange of full and concrete assumptions for abstract and empty ones: for of matter and force you know nothing except on the very same tenure on which others hold the ideas you reject; and on whatever grounds you call the interpretation of the universe by Dead Force a *science*, on the same must its interpretation by Living Force be a science too. The different choice of an interpreting conception entitles neither expositor to excommunicate the other, and banish him into the outer darkness. Natural theology then, I must contend, is a perfectly legitimate exercise of the human intellect. It simply carries over into the natural world that idea of a Living Will at the heart of things, which it has found chiefly in the moral world; and tries how it will fit the kosmical scene, and adjust itself to the

natural laws, which thus far the scientific surveyors have laid open. Far from denying anything which they have found, such an interpreter necessarily adopts it all, as the very material on which he works. His account of the origin of things in no way contradicts theirs, but simply includes it; flinging around their field, which is limited to the detection of method, the embracing idea of intellectual purpose, and interfusing an omnipresent Thought with the working powers which they have found. He accepts in full their report of how things came about, and realize the ends we see; he only adds by way of caution—"You have found the laws of countless phenomena before unreduced; be content with this, and dream not that you have dispossessed their Cause. Once upon the track of their order, you can tell the issue of this or that, long before it comes. But that these *ends resulting* are *not ends contemplated* is more than you can ever shew: that they necessarily arise from their antecedents, only proves that they were not contemplated without being provided for; came they from Fate, or came they from pre-disposing Thought, this is an aspect which they must in any case present." While I thus vindicate a place among the recognized applications of the intellect for Natural Theology, I

must confess the retribution not surprising, if, after centuries of stupid obstruction from the divines, the men of science, in the exulting consciousness that their day has come, are tempted to break bounds, and to direct a reactionary scorn upon the philosophic theologian; whose province, however, they would more happily distinguish from their own, did they not include metaphysics in their contempt.

The occupation, then, of the moralist and theologian is not yet gone; and would not be in the smallest degree affected, though the palæontologist could actually shew under the microscope the very type of parent cell from which, through myriad links in natural history, the human race has sprung. The facts of personal life, of moral obligation, of social ties, of ideal aims, of religious intuition, are not altered, or made unworthy of intellectual treatment, by any previous development of the organism in which they appear. They remain phenomena *sui generis*, which no physiological record of corporeal antecedents, however refined and perfect it might be, would enable you to predict: they cannot be got under the object-glass of any optical instrument: they are known, and must for ever be known, only subjectively, through the consciousness of the human race, whether immediately, by silent indivi-

dual reflection, or mediately, by expression in language, in law, in literature, in the usages of the state and the worship of the temple. The systematic study of these things, with a view to disengage the purest truth attainable respecting the Divine relations of man, is what we mean by Scientific Theology; "*theology*," because a right apprehension of God is its end; "*scientific*," because in handling the materials, resort is had to an orderly plan and approved critical methods.

Though the classification of studies on which we proceed in this College has been determined partly by its practical object as a training school for ministers, partly by an economy of personal aptitudes in the teachers, it appears to me to be not deficient in scientific propriety and convenience. If we are to begin, as good sense requires, with the *better known*, our point of departure must necessarily be the type of moral and religious civilization which is present in our world to-day, whose life is before us, whose ideas are within us, and which, whether consciously or unconsciously, we shall carry with us as our measure into the critique of other forms. The Christian religion then, looked at as a realized spiritual fact, the nearest and best known, and, provisionally at least, the highest in the world,

occupies, not only justly but inevitably, the centre and main portion of the field. No object, however, can be judged of when seen insulated and alone; but only when struck by the crossing lights of various comparison, be it of contrast with foreign objects, or of partial similitude among the successive stages of its own growth. Hence the immense importance, and the vast scope, of the *historical theology* which engages two Professorships, and occupies the just primacy, in this place. Conceived in its whole extent, it would amount to a comparative history and critical survey of the religions of mankind, wherever they find distinctive expression in literature or life: under the limitations imposed by practical exigencies, it works out its object with special fulness all down the historical line of the Jewish and Christian faiths, with such collateral notices of other theologies as may at once clear the characteristics, and exhibit the affinities, of the main thread of light. So great is the apparatus of erudition involved in this survey, that in a thousand teachers it has overwhelmed the spiritual faculties, buried out of sight the end in view, and simply choked the well of life with a mass of learned dust: but it is wielded with ease, and applied with enriching power, where the ripe tact of the scholar and the copious resources of

the historical critic are simply at the service of quickened Christian affections and a supreme love of truth. The two biblical languages with their dialectic modifications, the whole series of biblical texts, with the history of their origin and transmission, the interpretation of their meaning, the testing of their recorded facts, the appreciation of their laws, their poetry, their *vaticinia*, the tracing through them of their growing religious idea, the reconstruction from them of their lost forms of life, are included in the programme of this department. Yet these are but its first section: for they bring us no further than the date of the literature itself; and it has run through time with an unmeasured and ever multiplying power, which makes its effects greater than itself, and more in need of voluminous exposition. The Christian Church in its rise, from a mere section in the synagogue or the proseucha, to a consolidated spiritual power dominating the civilized world; and again in its Protestant dispersion into varieties, irrigating new fields of thought, reaching the latent seeds of fresh growth, and, while outwardly falling to pieces, becoming by inward penetration more catholic than before;—presents a marvellous spectacle which no dry chronicler or ecclesiologist can exhibit, but only an expositor who has access to the

deepest springs of art and philosophy, of human aspiration and human trust.

Large and various as are the contents of historical theology, they do not, however, find for us our point of final rest. They present a crowd of significant phenomena which must be passed before the mind mainly in the order of time; and though incidentally the mixed multitude may be sifted out into its more or less pure elements by the comment of a philosophical expositor, he is too busy with pushing on the movement of his materials to pause in quest of their ultimate interpretation, or critically to establish his own critical tests. It remains to contemplate the whole of these phenomena in another light; as a language of manifestation expressive of the *religious nature and faculties of man;* and to seek the final roots and essential validity of those beliefs, which work out for themselves so august, so various, at one time so benign, at another so terrible a history. Only by a critique of human nature itself, by an analysis of its intrinsic capabilities, can the last principles be gained which may serve as criteria of religious truth, and justify the limits we assign to the retention of traditional beliefs. There is therefore a *philosophical theology* needed to supplement the historical. It is essentially a psychology; which,

in tracing the higher beliefs to their genesis, untwines from them the threads of accident, and discharges the colours of illusion, and lays bare the golden fibre of their imperishable texture. Were the religion of man due to a special faculty, of insulated function, the range of this investigation would be inconsiderable, and would fill but a chapter in the descriptive analysis of the human mind. But the elements of even the simplest faith are contributed from all sides of our nature; ideas of Causation, of Beauty, of Right, of Truth, all mingle in our conception of the Divine, and leave it only partially pursued to its ground, till our scrutiny has been carried through the whole circle of perceptive, logical, affectional and moral faculties. To distinguish a prejudice from an axiom, we must know the laws of legitimate intellectual action; to avoid confounding an abstraction of thought with a reality of being, we must read our mental experience aright, and not transpose the elements and the products of its history. To decide whether duty is a refinement of interest and sympathy, or speaks with a distinct voice of its own, and whether compunction is a reflected image of the public anger or an indigenous notice of violated obligation, we must discriminate, by the most rigorous tests, the primitive material

from the fabricated structure of our moral life. Whilst we hear all the religious phenomena explained away, on the one hand, as a tissue of artificial associations, spreading over the face of things a veil of illusion which is destined to dissolve like the ghosts already gone, and claimed, on the other hand, as the expression of native insight into things as they are, given us by the necessary postulates of reason and conscience; is it not evident that the last controversy is already passing on to the psychological field; and that on the self-interpretation of human nature depends the continued recognition of the Divine? Were it possible that the analyses of Thought and Will now prevalent in the schools should prove final, and that nothing should be found behind the current Logic of science, we should be living in the last age of Theology, and it would scarcely need another step for its self-knowledge to overbalance into self-extinction. Since, however, our "modern thought" does not solve, but only despair of the haunting problems of "Metaphysics," since again it makes no provision for any primary truths, but makes all our mental stores alike derivative,—and that from sensible experiences common to us with the brutes,—it may be surmised that intellectual curiosity may yet rise in discontent and

reclaim its natural range; that the device will not permanently succeed of shutting up vast chambers of human thought and labelling them "empty;" and that the relation between our phenomenal knowledge and what lies beyond it may be reconstrued, and lifted into a real relation, neither inscrutable nor insignificant. If so, there is a future still for philosophical theology; and the death with which, from the time of Epicurus to that of Comte, it has been so often threatened by the expositors of natural laws and molecular hypotheses, will yet be postponed. "Modern thought" is strong; but ancient trusts are stronger; and with the vigour of eternal youth they will re-assert their moral power, as the inexhaustible springs of noble and reverent action, and vindicate their intellectual place, as the immoveable bases of any satisfying philosophy.

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